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AGDA (M) (17 Nov 69)

FOR 61-UT-69D#46

24 November 1969

SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report: 9th Infantry Division, Period 25 February 1968 to 3 April 1969 (U) 8

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1. Reference: AR 1-26, subject, Senior Officer Debriefing Program (U) dated 4 November 1966.

19 Julian J. Ewell

2. Transmitted herewith is the report of LTC Julian J. Ewell, subject as above.

11 17 Sep 69

12 24p.

3. This report is provided to insure appropriate benefits are realized from the experiences of the author. The report should be reviewed in accordance with paragraphs 3 and 5, AR 1-26; however, it should not be interpreted as the official view of the Department of the Army, or of any agency of the Department of the Army.

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
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SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report

Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development  
Department of the Army  
Washington, D. C. 20310

1. Attached are three copies of the Senior Officer Debriefing Report prepared by LTC Julian J. Ewell covering the period in which he served as Commanding General, 9th Infantry Division.
2. LTC Ewell will submit another Senior Officer Debriefing Report upon completion of his present assignment as Commanding General, II FFORCEV.

FOR THE COMMANDER:

C. D. WILSON  
1LT, AGC  
Assistant Adjutant General

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HEADQUARTERS  
II FIELD FORCE VIETNAM

IMPRESSIONS OF A DIVISION COMMANDER IN VIETNAM

17 SEPTEMBER 1969

*Julian J. Ewell*  
JULIAN J. EWELL  
LIEUTENANT GENERAL, US ARMY

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## IMPRESSIONS OF A DIVISION COMMANDER IN VIETNAM

1. (U) The purpose of this paper is to record my impressions of counter-insurgency operations in VN. However, the various techniques peculiar to such operations have been so amply documented elsewhere that I have chosen instead to highlight selected aspects of divisional operations which proved useful in getting the 9th Infantry Division up to a peak of combat effectiveness. I present these ideas in full recognition of the fact that there are many wars in Vietnam, each of which is quite different due to variations in enemy, terrain and so on. In addition to which, the war itself changes very rapidly as the Communists struggle to stay in the ball game by changing their own tactics and strategy. It might seem that I favored doing things differently than by the "book". If that is so, I plead guilty. My only criteria was to do what worked. It may be that "different" approaches work because the VC aren't used to them; it may be that they work because they are fundamentally better; or they may work because general doctrine keeps one in a sound ball park area and the "little difference" gives an extra zip to the operation. It should be borne in mind that the 9th Division was in an area of very high enemy density. This enemy, being largely native VC, had always been very difficult to bring to battle, but once that problem had been mastered clobbering them was no great trick.

2. (C) a. (U) To begin with one must be coldly realistic. One must strip the wishful thinking or clichés from one's mind and come to grips with cold hard facts. For example, one hears that we have in Vietnam the most professional army ever fielded by the U.S.. The fact is that due to turbulence all units fluctuate between order and chaos and tend to be about average. The cliché--Division X is doing a terrific job. The fact--Hamlet Y two kilometers down the road is a VC hot bed. In short, while retaining one's enthusiasm and optimism one must recognize that the Vietnam war is most difficult to cope with and requires good performance to stay even and outstanding performance in order to make useful progress.

b. (U) In order to illustrate the way unit performance shifts up and down, I have selected a point in time and informally rated U.S. units I have observed:

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Two divisions--outstanding--major contribution

One division--average--some contribution

One division--below average--minimal contribution

One brigade--average--some contribution

One brigade--below average--minimal contribution

These ratings would vary from time to time as one would expect.

c. (U) There is a tremendous premium on excellence and precision in conducting tactical operations. The classic "jitterbug" is a good example. The jitterbug, as perfected by Hank Emerson, requires doing well many sequential operations. People would try to copy it and get a massive dry hole. On examination it would be discovered that they had omitted or done poorly a couple of steps. In order to achieve excellence brigade and battalion commanders must give operations intensive supervision 24 hours a day. In the 9th, for various reasons, we put both ADC's on operations (i.e. 2 ADC Maneuver). This kept operations up so tight that we continued it throughout my tenure. Of course, it requires two good ADC's who are tactics minded.

3. (C) Intelligence--a. (U) An effective intelligence operation is the single most important aspect of divisional operations in Vietnam. (This is a complex subject and I don't intend to cover it in detail.) Three good rules to follow are: First, each commander should be his own G2/S2 and insist on a good "2" to help him. (The "2" unaided can't relate intelligence to operations very well.) Second, speed is essential. Intelligence in VN is highly perishable. Third, brigade commanders, in particular, must follow the three cycle intelligence approach: Every evening, study the latest intelligence, and plan operations, every morning review the night's developments and revise, during the day change operations to react to new information as it becomes available.

b. (C) The intelligence cycle must work with lightning speed. This takes real organization not only to gather the intelligence, but to get it to the battalion and brigade levels where it is used. The rapid and effective use of combat intelligence obtained from contacts as well as the

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rapid exploitation of Hoi Chanh and PW's are all important. (Hoi Chanh are particularly valuable as they are more willing and completely exploitable, i.e. not subject to Geneva Convention restraints. This is also true in the psyops area as well.) Radar, Star, Red Haze, sensors all play an important role. However, combat intelligence, gained in contacts, is the glue that holds the intelligence picture together. ARVN/GVN sources, to include the DIOCC's, are important. The Vietnamese have sources and intuition we can't match. However, the total US/VN effort is better than either alone if the information is exploited rapidly. When working with the Vietnamese, one must try to break through the language barrier completely. Sophisticated nuances rarely come through otherwise. One must also guard against leaks as in some parts of the country ARVN and/or GVN are penetrated by enemy agents.

c. (U) A good rule is to react to every intelligence report received. The little "teensy" reports are very important. The really top commander eventually can almost "hear what the VC are saying". He can almost close his eyes and visualise where the VC are and what they are doing. This comes mainly from experience and hard work, but is partially a built-in intellectual ability which some people have and others don't. Experience does have a lot to do with it. An old hand notes little indicators that a new boy thinks unimportant. In this connection, the Communists are so clever at concealing their movements that indicators tend to be very fine grain. Even at division and higher levels commanders must look at very small indicators. This requires a change in thinking as senior commanders in an European environment normally deal primarily with large grain intelligence. For this reason I suggest utilizing raw information to a great extent. G-2 staffs tend to rub the sharp edges off as they collate information and the little indicators disappear.

d. (U) Targeting--There is a school of thought in Vietnam which parcels out all the targets to specific type units--main force to U.S. and ARVN, local force to RF/PF, VCI to police and PRU, etc. This is sound in theory and probably at some indefinite future date might work well.

However, at the present time I favor U.S. (and ARVN) units targeting every kind of unit from top to bottom. There are three reasons for this. First, in most areas the Communists have broken down and are so mixed together that they can't be sorted out. Second, some of the other units

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(ARVN, RF, Police, etc.) in a particular area may not be skillful or tough enough to achieve useful results in tracking down and attacking their particular target. And thirdly, the realities of the situation are such that a unit should react immediately to any intelligence, which leads to a mixed bag.

I, therefore, favor targeting everyone in sight, as well as working the Hoi Chanh and VCI circuit. In fact, if a particular area (say a tough local force company, deeply covered VCI, etc.) is giving trouble, the U.S. units should work with the Vietnamese to crack it so the RF/PF and other local resources can handle it. As the war progresses, a more functional break out may be desirable.

e. (C) Counterintelligence--The Communists (the VC in particular) have a good intelligence effort. In the Delta they have penetrated many governmental activities. The general rule is to tell no one (or only a few key people) what your plans are. This makes coordination difficult, but it can be achieved by various devices. Friendly reconnaissance type operations, which I discuss later on, are particularly deceptive as they tend to be more fluid and non-repetitive than normal operations and are very difficult for the Communists to read. Communication security must be improved continuously.

f. (U) PW's--The policy in the 9th was to capture as many PW's as possible and to work hard at it. This is rough going as it sometimes causes more friendly casualties. However, the payoff is in the combat intelligence gained.

4. (C) Operations--A commander's style of operations bears a direct relationship to results achieved in Vietnam. My own placed strong emphasis and reliance on the following:

a. (U) To begin with the Leavenworth type of defense or offense is best suited for fighting large Communist units in major battles such as Tet, Mini Tet, etc. In such battles the standard rules apply, more or less, although fighting in cities is a real problem. (There is a special set of rules of engagement for urban areas designed to hold down damage and civilian casualties. These restraints take some getting used to, but are not a real handicap.) In these toe to toe slugging matches put in as many battalions as you can get your hands on in order to crack the enemy quickly.

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b. (U) A good guideline in fighting the Communists in general is to avoid set patterns which he can learn to read. One might almost say it is a good idea to figure out several approaches and then pick the one that is the most unusual. Another guideline is to generally avoid the principle of mass. If the Communists are in a highly evasive mood (which they are now), the use of too many troops makes them evade immediately. The art is to put in just the right amount to cover the ground, but not enough to frighten the enemy off. Firepower can be overdone also as it may scare the Communists off (unless they are pinned down first). There are exceptions, of course--heavily defended base areas in jungle, a new Communist unit which thinks it is a real tiger, a unit which is in a particular area which can be effectively sealed off, and a unit which is dug in in a populated area. These exceptions take lots of men or firepower or both.

c. (U) It bears repeating time and time again that these days (1969) one seldom plans or carries out attacks or operations, one conducts reconnaissance. Once a contact is gained an attack is organized rapidly to exploit the situation. The attack is normally by firepower--artillery, tac air, gunships or, sometimes, B-52 strikes. Troops are used to seal off the enemy or to try to hold him in place. Contacts are what are needed. A division that achieves 25 contacts each day will be very good, 50 outstanding, and 75 would be phenomenal. It is true that the distinction between reconnaissance and attacks is somewhat of a semantic distinction, but it is an important one nonetheless. I found it helpful for mech/armored types with European backgrounds to tell them to act as though they were conducting armored cav reconnaissance operations. This gave them the picture in terms familiar to them.

d. (U) The 9th Division developed a style which depended on small unit infantry actions in which supporting firepower played a less dominant role. Very aggressive reconnaissance, quick maneuver and accurate small arms fire were used to chop up small groups of enemy in great number with the seal off and firepower used only on dug-in units. This requires a high degree of skill and an enemy that is so panicky that his first thought is to break and run. However, there is no doubt that a moderately well trained U.S. unit, handled aggressively and at high speed, is much more effective than a Communist unit. Very high kill ratios on the order of 50 to 1 can be attained routinely. This is sometimes called "flushing" as opposed to "sealing" in that the infantry flushes the VC out into the open. The small, well trained U.S. unit used to fight the VC in open warfare is our true "secret weapon".

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e. (U) A really good brigade has battalions that are skillful in many tactical maneuvers:

- (1) Daylight patrols (RIF's) or reconnaissance
- (2) Eagle fighting (of if really good, jitterbugging)
- (3) Seal and pile on
- (4) "Flushing"
- (5) Night ambushes (bushmaster and checkerboard)
- (6) Use of snipers (night and day)

The division and higher headquarters help out by aggressive support with:

- (1) Artillery and air support
- (2) Rangers (LRRP) as hunter-killers (or as recon parties)
- (3) Air cavalry in day operations
- (4) Assault helicopter companies
- (5) Gunships in day operations
- (6) Night hawk or night search (air cavalry at night)
- (7) Night raids

By playing on these various skills as one would on an organ the brigade commander hits the enemy where he is most vulnerable, forces him into the open and chops him up. If his units have all these skills, the commander has total flexibility and can shift his operations around at will and dominate the enemy both psychologically and actually.

f. (U) Training--It is suggested that training or retraining be conducted continuously. A useful formula is to designate a minimum number of subjects to be covered. A possible list would be:

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- (1) Combat shooting
- (2) Daylight battle drill
- (3) Night ambushes
- (4) Booby traps
- (5) A subject to be selected by local commander

These subjects are covered, very basically, in one to two hour periods during standdown periods. This allows each subject to be covered every 2 to 3 weeks and keeps the basic infantryman SHARP. It seems a rather formless approach but it gets results at the level where it counts.

g. (U) Day versus night operations. Any good outfit should take the "night away from the VC". However, night kills cost about three times the effort of a day kill. Therefore, night operations should be used primarily to drive the VC into day movement and to "keep the VC honest". He can then be hunted down with less effort. Night snipers are most effective and require only modest effort for the results attained. The best balance between day and night effort varies according to what is paying off and what the VC reaction is at the time.

h. (U) In recent months daylight reconnaissance (or RIF's) are the big producers. The perfect combination is to combine eagle flighting (to cover a lot of ground), RIF's to work more difficult areas, full use of air cav and AHC gunships to knock off strays and snipers to block covered routes of egress. (The so-called RIF is rarely a reconnaissance in force. It is really several company level reconnaissance operations.)

i. (U) The air cavalry troop is the most valuable single unit in the division. Its care and feeding should be reserved to the division commander. Never piecemeal the cav troop, use it in its cavalry role. By very careful management of operations and maintenance a cav troop can be stretched to work two brigades simultaneously or to work one both night and day. A cav troop worth its salt can get 50 to 100 kills a month on its own and probably locate up to half of the troop contacts. With three air cavalry troops I always put them under the brigade CO's and used improvised divisional assets for divisional missions. This close association stimulates teamwork and makes for very rapid reaction times.

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j. (C) Mass production guerrilla war. The Ninth Division, in the winter and spring of 1969, developed an operational style which might, for want of a better term, be called "mass production guerrilla war". It calls for a high effort, high speed operation. 75% of the companies are in the field, 25% resting, retraining and on local security. Each brigade each day covers its area with a full jitterbug. The bulk of the force reconns the area on foot, preferably against sniper screens. Air cav and AHC gunships cap the operation to locate targets and shoot up flushes. At night less than half of the force conducts checkerboard or bushmaster ambushes. Each brigade conducts a night search or raid. Done well, with adequate air cavalry and helicopters, this almost guarantees high body counts with appreciable PW, Hoi Chanh and VCI in addition. Kill ratios should be over 50 to 1. The pressure on the VC is so intense that it just tears their guts out. (Of course, this would probably be less productive in heavy jungle which tends to slow the tempo down.) Pacification is supported directly or indirectly as necessary. If ARVN or RF/PF upgrading is being conducted, the tempo or effort probably should be lessened in those areas as such a high speed style interferes with the learning process. Once an ARVN unit catches on to this technique, they do reasonably well with it although the idea of continuous operations is a new one to them.

k. (U) Productive operations vs wasted time. One must constantly stress what is actually paying off and cancel out or deemphasize what isn't. This sounds easy, but isn't. For example, any unit continually picks up necessary but unproductive missions--guarding a bridge--one company, protecting a signal installation--one platoon, escorting convoys--a mech platoon, and so on ad infinitum. These jobs don't eliminate a single VC. At one time the 9th had almost two battalions on such ash and trash, almost 30% of its fighting strength. Getting out from under without developing a reputation for ducking missions requires Machiavellian finesse. Another pitfall is the preconceived notion--for example, night operations are magic so do a lot of them. Unfortunately they are only 1/3 as effective as daylight operations so actually one should do as few night operations as one can get away with and do the job. Some schools of thought say always prep a LZ. Another says it lessens tactical surprise, only do it when absolutely necessary. As the VC fragmented, friendly units fragmented (too slowly) to follow them down. As the VC in many areas were in squad or smaller units, it was assumed that platoons

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or squads were the proper maneuver unit. After careful observation, it was determined that platoons maneuvered under company control were much more productive. It looks at this date (August '69) that we may be making the next drop down to independent platoon level reconnaissance. Many units use air cavalry primarily as gunships. My experience is that this drastically reduces the great capability of the unit and rapidly. So don't operate from preconceived notions or loose judgements. Base your operational style on cold hard facts.

l. (U) One objective in Vietnam is to minimize civilian casualties and damage. It is quite feasible to conduct major combat in thickly populated areas with minimum damage. One has to focus on the enemy and avoid the people. The 9th generally used a variant of the urban rules of engagement which led the commanders into step by step escalation of firepower thereby using minimum firepower to do the job and consequently causing minimum damage.

m. (U) In open terrain the importance of air cavalry and assault helicopter company support can't be overstated. If a brigade's normal effectiveness is given a value of 1, it can attain a value of 8 with an air cav troop and an AHC if it receives them almost every day. A top brigade commander with the same cav troop and AHC every day can attain a value as high as 15. Teamwork, skill and artistry makes the difference. I am certain that three of each gives a division maximum return but requires very skillful management. Four of each would be ideal. The average division in Vietnam, in III CTZ at least, gets 1 or 2 of each a day which makes it very difficult to develop any real skill in or sizeable results from airmobile operations. Aircraft can be overdone, of course. After a certain point, people just fly around and there aren't any enemy in the air. My comments are basically oriented at medium range operations. The air cav divisions, with more aircraft, are designed to achieve comparable results on longer range operations.

n. (U) Commanders are finding it more and more useful to analyze their operations in depth using rather straight forward statistical analysis. This enables one to isolate strong and weak points and thereby guide tactical and retraining emphasis. The type of things that are examined are:

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Proportion of companies on offensive, defensive, and standdown missions

Percentage of operations with contact and contacts with kills

Effectiveness of eagle flighting, ground reconnaissance (RIF's), night ambush, air cavalry, artillery and air strikes, etc.

Effectiveness coefficient of unit (enemy eliminated per company per day) and kill ratios

These figures have to be used with discretion but give commanders considerable insight

o. (U) Snipers--The most effective single program we had was the sniper program. This took a whole year to get off the ground from scratch but we ended up with 80 snipers who would kill (or capture) from 200 to 300 enemy a month. Not only did we get this direct return but they also encouraged the other men to shoot well. Snipers, like everything else, are highly sensitive to tactics and technique so one has to handle them well. The flat open Delta terrain was ideal for snipers. Other divisions are now trying snipers in other areas so we shall see how they work on a broader basis. Snipers had been tried before in the theater with tepid results, but we insisted that the entire program be exactly right, demanded results and got them.

p. (U) Tiger Scouts--The Tiger Scout (Kit Carson Scout) is a tremendous asset. He knows the terrain and enemy, is good at booby traps, speaks the language, and can sort out VC from friendlies. Ours seemed completely loyal and we looked after them. We had over 400, which allowed us to put one in each squad and in other useful places. This also upped our 11 Bravo (Rifle) strength considerably thereby giving the units more depth and staying power.

q. (U) Unit Management--I am convinced that one path to good results is to drive the Communists day and night day after day. This requires very careful management. For some time all of the battalions in the 9th had only three rifle companies. This was a real nightmare. In order to operate continuously one had to shuttle companies around between battalions frequently. The four rifle company battalion is much more manageable--three can fight and one rest, train and pull security.

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Another important factor in the Delta or in other wet terrain is that 48 hours in the field is the absolute exposure limit. Immersion foot, fungal infection and pyoderma will eat a battalion up if 48 hours is exceeded very often.

For a brigade to work an area thoroughly it has to have three battalions. I have seen a top brigade commander do it with two, but it was tough. Fortunately, the 9th had ten infantry battalions so the two battalion brigade problem rarely arose. The exact system for managing a battalion through day patrols, jitterbugging, night ambushes and the rest varies according to the situation but it must be done smoothly and well. Another aspect of unit management is area familiarity. To really clobber the VC a battalion should know the ground and the enemy thoroughly. This requires several weeks of hard work at the very least. I am opposed, in the normal case, to big operations which pull battalions off their normal hunting ground and masses them in unfamiliar places. On the other hand, a unit may go stale on an area and a move may be in order to break the psychological block.

Although a 75% commitment rate is hard work, I always tried to keep the men fresh. Tired men make mistakes and suffer needless casualties. No long walks in the sun--they don't pay. This bears watching as VN veterans sometimes come from units which featured long range patrolling in effect and they tend to get into foot slogging.

r. (U) Riverine operations--By mid 1968 the VC in the northern Delta had adapted to the riverine operation quite well. As a result, in order to get useful results, one had to have the normal level of helicopter and air cav support. However, due to the elaborate waterway and river network a riverine capability still allowed one to move supplies and firepower around easily. In effect we ended up with standard footmobile and air-mobile operations with the riverine giving us extra flexibility.

5. (C) Pacification--Pacification is extremely important. It improves the security, political organization, and economic situation of the countryside --which after all is the primary aim of the war. Of equal importance from a commander's point of view, it tends, to a degree, to sap the support given the VC, making him easier to find and defeat in the field.

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a. (U) Meaningful pacification support can be given with a very modest effort if properly handled. It requires an open mind, close coordination with province and district officials and advisors and close attention to the Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) score sheets.

b. (U) Some units do a tremendous job with pacification support but put so much effort into it that their military operations suffer unduly. I prefer the opposite approach. Put maximum military pressure on the enemy. This helps pacification more than anything else. Then support pacification by doing what the local authorities can't do well.

c. (U) The 9th worked hard to get Hoi Chanh and VCI. The Hoi Chanh is extremely valuable as he can be exploited for both intelligence and psyops. The VCI is, of course, important in himself. However, I required VCI to be taken in order to help make the District Intelligence and Operations Command Centers (DIOCC's) work. Also, in the Delta, one has to work among the people and in the hamlets to keep the VC from hiding there. This is prime VCI territory by definition.

d. (C) Medcaps are acknowledged as a tremendous tool and need little comment. However, the 9th Division deemphasized medcaps per se and emphasized Intelligence Medcaps (ICAP). These are medcaps with a covert but primary purpose of gaining intelligence. After much practice, an ICAP can get useful intelligence 60 to 70% of the time and still perform its humanitarian purposes.

e. (U) I deemphasized civic action for reasons I can't quite put my finger on. In spite of that we did a lot of useful work. Self help civic action is to be preferred but takes lots of time and patience. I guess I basically feel that the "hearts and minds" approach can be overdone. In the Delta the only way to overcome VC control and terror is by brute force applied against the VC. In a more pacified area a different approach might be better.

f. (U) By stressing discriminate and selective use of firepower, one can minimize beating up the countryside. The 9th fought constantly through areas which looked quite peaceful and unharmed from the air. In other areas, where this emphasis wasn't applied or wasn't feasible, the countryside looked like the Verdun battlefields. On the other hand, one has to lower the boom occasionally and battalion commanders have authority to use heavy firepower in populated areas if small arms won't do the trick and the situation meets the requirements of the rules of engagement.

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g. (U) Road repairs--Useable roads drive VC away. The 9th built, or rather rehabilitated, many roads for both military and pacification purposes. A road being repaired draws VC like flies so makes a good bait for a killing ground. Mining is a constant problem in some areas. We found sniper stake outs much quicker, more effective and more lasting than any other device (road running, sweeping, etc.). Two or three dead sappers usually cooled a road off for a month or two. Actually all the various means should be used flexibly to avoid setting a pattern. The reason roads drive the VC out is that regular units tend to avoid the people and vice versa. They use the people for information, porters, etc., but don't trust them. Roads bring in people and people drive out the VC. A sure sign of VC is a broken road. (This is known in VC parlance as liberating an area.)

h. (U) Planning and supervision of pacification support is very important. We used the pacification program and the HES sheets as our bible and focused in on the specific areas and activities that were needed and did little else. This works. Occasionally, one does something that seems of marginal utility for pure political effect. We fixed up an old temple and tomb which had no practical value but had a very powerful sentimental appeal to the Vietnamese. High sensitivity pays off, but is difficult to achieve. The Vietnamese liaison officers don't even seem to be able to tell what is important to the peasant--too Westernized, I guess. The pacification envelope is a good idea. We marked an envelope around all targeted hamlets and tried to conduct a certain proportion of all operations within the envelopes. If sufficient RF/PF were present, this wouldn't be necessary. Each battalion conducted two cordon and search operations each week. The elaborate type didn't pay off for us--small, quick ones were better.

i. (U) Experience--There is little doubt that the Vietnamese War has to be learned by doing. A good second tour man invariably starts faster and goes farther. After nine months as a division commander, I could deal with most problems by instinct. I would say a division should try to hold infantry battalion and brigade commanders for six months, ADC's and division commanders for twelve. After that they are burned out and should be replaced and cycled into staff jobs where their know-how can be utilized. Brigade commanders can do well for more than six months in some areas, it depends on the amount of pressure they are under.

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6. (U) Logistics--Logistics is not a major problem in Vietnam. Most things are available in adequate quantities. Thus, one only has to work on the few number of items that the system doesn't produce easily. Spare parts were sometimes a problem, but not a major one. One could always suck more than his fair share of parts out of the system by following the regulations to the letter. The computer only works on the proper requisition. By stressing proper procedure one will preempt parts which would otherwise go to a unit whose requisitions are incorrect. We moonlighted a little of necessity, but never cheated on priorities. Maintenance in general was no problem. Engineer equipment was somewhat of an exception, but the requisition trick mentioned above solved that to a degree. Aircraft maintenance is the most important single area in the division, due to the fact that the tempo of operations is dependent to a large degree on a high aircraft availability rate. With a fixed base system, as in Vietnam, one can optimize the aircraft maintenance system (hangars, hardstands, lights, etc.) and achieve peacetime availability rates under combat conditions. We flew the fleet 90 hours per month per aircraft (and were edging up to 100 hours) and kept the availability rate over 80%. Hueys and Cobras could be kept up in the high 80's. This required a virtuoso maintenance performance with iron control over every aspect of both aircraft operations and maintenance. We were also fortunate in that we had DS detachments (like in Assault Helicopter Companies). This gave us a much more efficient maintenance system. Intensive PLL, ASL and parts management is of paramount importance.

7. (U) Personnel in general--The personnel system does pretty well, but one can't afford to rely on it solely or the division will be flat as a flounder. In other words one must help the system by some judicious recruiting.

a. Tremendous emphasis must be placed on obtaining top notch officers in the following jobs:

Brigade and Artillery commanders (Good brigade commanders are absolutely essential)

Chief of Staff

Maneuver Battalion commanders

Artillery Battalion commanders

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The more specialized battalions (cavalry, signal, engineer, etc.) don't pose such a problem as the competition is so keen that one tends to get super-outstanding officers. The G's can usually be passed up from battalion command and as a result, tend to be quite good.

b. Brigade and battalion commanders should be encouraged to recruit a team. The best brigade commander I have seen (Colonel Hank Emerson) had two battalion commanders he had picked himself, who in turn had recruited some of their company commanders themselves. This brigade was outstanding for months due to this original shot in the arm. Keep trying to get some born tactical commanders and leaders who are "water walkers". They not only set an example for others to emulate, but their performance allows you to carry some of the less gifted commanders.

In this connection most brigade and battalion commanders have to learn on the job. An overlap of about a week allows a new commander to hit the ground running. Some people don't like overlaps--just tell them to forget it and be thankful for such a break. One can't fire slow learners. The Army can't afford it. However, one or two months is all the time one can afford to wait for results. If an officer with two left feet, or who is always unlucky, or who has no tactical feel shows up, ease him out after a fair trial. He will cost the division many casualties and it is unfair to the men to keep him on.

c. Enlisted personnel problems are less manageable. My only comment here is to keep trying to get your fair share and if you are short in any skill area, OJT yourself out of it. It is possible to recruit some experienced NCO's and every little bit helps. The NCO candidates are a big help in filling the junior NCO gap.

d. In the general area of personnel management and administration go to exquisite pains to see that the things that affect the men's morale and well being are done perfectly or almost. Pay, promotions, awards, mail, R&R, Information and publicity, emergency leaves, military discipline, EM clubs, etc., are most important. I found it useful to review these areas weekly. A ramshackle outfit can't fight well for long. A hard fighting outfit needs good support to stand up under continuous pressure. The men don't mind fighting day and night if they know their losses will be as low as humanly possible and that they are taken care of.

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8. (U) Psychological Operations--The war in Vietnam, in fact everything about Vietnam, is highly psychological. Every situation is a combination of things as they are, as they seem to be and as people think they are. It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine how effective psyops is. However, it has been my observation that the best units tend to have active psyops programs. Perhaps an active program is a reflection of the aggressive state of mind of the commander.

The mechanics of a program--leaflets, face to face loudspeakers, etc., are pretty well understood. Control is more difficult. A gimmick is to lay out the various themes (Chieu Hoi, volunteer informants, military defeat, etc.) and the targets (units, audiences, etc.) and measure the activity rate. This usually gives one something to work against and stimulates ideas. Ideas are the real meat of the matter. The Vietnamese have lots of assets plus the language and background knowledge skills. They do well when energized by U.S. example or teamwork. Kit Carson Scouts and Armed Propaganda Teams are very useful for face to face work.

9. (U) Aircraft Improvisation--The normal situation in Vietnam for an Infantry Division is to be on short rations chopper-wise. One can usually muster one's own organic choppers, the air cavalry troop plus one supporting Assault Helicopter Company (ten slicks plus gunships). If lucky, a division may have two air cav troops and two Assault Helicopter Companies. Even with this amount there are innumerable tactical situations which clamor for additional air assets. Considerable mileage can be gained by improvising small aircraft packages of various sorts from the organic battalion. The first requirement is to drive the availability rate up through aggressive maintenance thereby generating "extra" aircraft. There are many options, of course: use the air cav troop slicks as a package for eagle flighting, a small cav type package for night searches, gunships for night RRF, Mini-Cav, etc. One can also, where the enemy situation permits, use the AHC gunships essentially as cav to cap an operation and pick off strays as they are flushed. By such improvisation one can give modest support to a brigade which might otherwise be grounded. Another form of the same concept is to split the air cav troop and an AHC to give two brigades half each. The critical aspect here is to keep the tempo of operations up. If a brigade is grounded for some days, the VC tend to slip out from under and it takes some days with aircraft to regain tempo and get the VC back under control. Incidentally, the aviation battalion people delight in running combat operations once in a while. A real morale booster.

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10. (U) Miscellaneous

a. Priorities--Most operations in a division in Vietnam can be counted upon to run reasonably well. However, due to the constant turnover, to achieve real excellence requires tremendous effort and command attention. One can only afford to put full effort into a manageable number of areas so a clear definition of priorities is desirable. My personal approach was to put top priority on intelligence, operations, aircraft maintenance and management, and selection of key commanders. I then selected a reasonable number of "supporting" type operations to peak up. Most of these were personnel management "morale and welfare" matters such as pay, promotions, awards, R&R, clubs, military discipline, emergency leaves, etc. (See Paragraph 7d). Other items might be radars, sensors, Tiger Scouts (Kit Carson Scouts), Rangers, Snipers, etc. I deliberately held the number of these down so that they didn't exceed my personal span of control and that of my most reliable assistants (ADC's, C/S, etc.).

In this connection I found it helpful to devise graphic statistical reports which allowed one to measure effectiveness and progress as opposed to activity. This is not easy to do in some cases.

Although I always favored competition, I was careful not to overdo it in the area of combat results. Rather, I urged good performance and let the results speak for themselves.

b. Relations with other nationalities--The 9th worked with the Thais for quite a while. This takes extreme care and delicacy. The Thais are quite Asiatic in their viewpoint and one has to be punctilious about every aspect of a relationship.

The Vietnamese are less edgy. I suppose they are more used to working in harness with Westerners. However, due regard for the niceties helps here also.

The basic lesson is to show genuine interest and respect for ones comrades in arms. That is 3/4 of the battle.

c. Needless to say a good IO is essential. We had an IO section that wouldn't stop, with the bulk of its effort devoted to publicizing the small unit, the junior officer and the soldiers in ranks. We did the usual things

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well--TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, combat art, home town releases, etc. Coming to Vietnam just after Tet I decided to play our accomplishments very flat. This may have lost us some splashy articles, but built great credibility and in the long run paid off.

d. ADC's--The 9th practiced one unusual technique--that of having two ADC Maneuver. The CG and Chief of Staff took care of support. This requires a very competent Chief of Staff (Colonel Jim Hunt was the best). This arrangement started when the division was scattered all over the place fighting two or three separate little wars. It gave such emphasis to intelligence and operations that we continued it after we contracted into a somewhat more manageable area. It's worth trying in a complex situation. Of course, the outside demands on the division commander are great. The 9th, with one foot in each corps zone, had at least three bosses and usually worked with or beside about three divisional size ARVN units. This required an unusual amount of command liaison and also favored more active use of both ADC's in operations.

e. Artillery--I really have nothing unusual to offer in the artillery area. The 9th Division artillery moved a lot, but that was primarily due to the large AO's. We also tried to mass artillery as a routine procedure. With an axial road net we used road marches to move the artillery wherever feasible. We also had one SP 155 battery which enabled us to shift firepower rapidly. The riverine battalion, mounted on barges, was quite mobile. We also used paddy platforms which enabled one to set up on soft ground or in rice paddies. The most unusual technique was close support in a seal and pile on operation. This required extremely accurate and controlled shooting. Due to our style of operation--i.e. small units against small units--we didn't develop the skill in the use of massive integrated fire support that the 25th Infantry Division did.

11. (U) Conclusions--I am sure I could write several papers on Vietnam and each one would be different, but at this point the key thoughts herein are as follows:

a. One must have about five "water walkers" at the General-full colonel level with the bulk of the remaining commanders and staff outstanding. Otherwise you are out of luck. These key officers have to know what makes a division tick. A professional high level staff officer with limited troop experience

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just doesn't have the background or the time to pick up the necessary skills. Previous Vietnamese experience is a real bonus.

b. One must clobber the Communists. The Communists in Vietnam operate basically through the application of force and terror. If one can smash this core effort, all else becomes manageable (though difficult). If one cannot clobber the Communists, pacification, psyops and all the important sophisticated elements of complete restoration of governmental authority may or may not be feasible. Once one breaks through the pacification sound barrier this dictum probably no longer applies but such areas are still the exception rather than the rule.

c. One must be coldly realistic, if not pessimistic. It is impossible to overstate the difficulty of the task here and if a division commander believes his own press agent and rests on his laurels or the division reputation, he is doing our cause and his unit a real disservice.

d. Intelligence and operations go hand in hand and must be aggressively pursued 24 hours a day. React to every intelligence report at once.

e. The Communists must be pursued 24 hours a day 365 days a year. Relentless and continuous pressure.

f. There is a high payoff on excellence in tactics and technique. Perfection is not necessary, just good enough to get consistent results.

g. High speed and tricky, deceptive tactics are necessary to bring an evasive enemy to battle. Conduct reconnaissance not attacks or operations.

h. Tactical skill against an evasive enemy consists of being able to find him, i.e. make contacts, and then make kills. A skillful tactician with a unit that does well in all the standard techniques can achieve spectacular results.

i. Companies on offensive operations X contacts X kills per contact X well trained infantry equals high enemy elimination rates, high kill ratios and low friendly casualties.

j. Constant retraining is recommended.

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k. Pacification support is very important, but need not utilize a high level of resources.

l. The ability to work positively and smoothly with Allies is an absolute must.

m. The management of aircraft operations and maintenance and the care and feeding of the air cavalry are a major responsibility of the division commander. This includes supporting aircraft (to a degree) as well as organic. You can't afford sloppy or lethargic support in this area.

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